

## Duxbury Field Notes

By FAHY BYGATE

May has dawned sunny, warm and full of returned migrants! Despite the early date, lots of birds are back in our woods and yards. Last week, I had remarkable success with sightings in the most unlikely place and the first sighting was not even a bird! On a balmy, sunny day on Route 3, in Kingston, a Green Darner, that giant of the dragonfly world, zipped past my car and disappeared over the marsh. If no one else reports an earlier sighting of a dragonfly or damselfly, it will be the first one of the year! Remarkably, the following day, in the very same spot, a Glossy Ibis flew over my car and into the very same marsh! This is not the usual best spot for spring sightings! For a moment, I debated if I should just patrol Route 3 all spring.

But, my common sense has taken over and starting this morning, I will be checking my favorite local "hot spot" in order to see what the Migration of 2001 will be like. Today, as I locked the car and started down the trail, things were very quiet. I have done this enough times to know which parts of the trail can be hot and which are usually not the best spots to expect anything fancy. The parking lot here can really be hopping on a good day but this early in the season, I didn't expect much and I was not surprised.

At the bottom of the hill, the trail levels out with a small, sandy outwash on one side. Here I often see Palm Warblers early in the spring. Across the pond, a Yellow Warbler sang "sweet, sweet, I am so sweet!"

At the edge of the pond, I saw something moving through the leaf litter. The sun hit the top of the head of a small bird and revealed a bright rusty cap. The bobbing tail and streaky yellow body all added up to a Palm Warbler. It was picking its way along the edge of the pond along with two or three other Palms. One of the first warblers to return in early spring, it is a pretty one and easy to identify.

I climbed the hill that overlooks Home Bog. Calls of Red-winged Blackbirds, Song Sparrows and Carolina Wrens rocked the morning air. To my right, in the scrub, an invisible House Wren burred his spring song. There is always one day in the early spring when House Wrens are the Bird of the Day and the woods sounds like dozens of kids with bubble pipes have been let loose in the woods. Today, there were only one or two but many are on their way.

Later in the trail, I ran into the Palm Warblers again. They were still hanging out together, mostly silent with just a lisp here and there to keep them together. But, another call caught my ear. Over the heads of the Palms, a few Yellow-Rumped Warblers could be seen flitting in and out. As I focused my binoculars on them, a gorgeous Black and White Warbler appeared, moving up a tree trunk. It sang its "zee zee zee," a sawing sound that I find easy to relate to this little zebra-striped bird.

Add one Oriole and a possible Parula Warbler singing in the distance and you have the sum total of today's search but it is very early. Soon, the trees will leaf out and more birds will return and the challenge will get harder. Meanwhile, I am content to add to the day's treasures the patch of Wood Anemones now blooming at the fork in the path, the fresh green of the Skunk Cabbage bursting forth along the creek, spiky Equisetum, Horsetail Fern, brand new fiddleheads just emerging, the first dandelions. And, of course, along the path in a sunny spot, two Spring Azure butterflies twirling around each other in a spring dance! How can you not go to the woods?

Well, you could always check out the marsh. Nancy Bennett, who lives on Hick's Point Lane, has a front row seat for one of the most exciting events in town. She can see, from her yard, the newly occupied Osprey Pole in the marsh off of Bay Rd. She has been watching and recording the return of these "sea eagles" to Duxbury every year. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, last year, Nancy watched as a howling southeast wind picked up the existing nest and blew off the pole and into the marsh. Billy Bennett rigged up a "nesting cage" out of one of his lobster traps and this year, the Ospreys are back in business! Nancy says that the birds returned about three weeks ago, rebuilt the nest and settled in. I drove by the marsh last night at sunset. The female bird was hunkered down, presumably on eggs. At her side, the male stood upright, surveying the marsh. If all goes well, we can all watch the family of this once-endangered species rear and fledge their young. To view the Ospreys, drive by the Bay Road marsh but do not make any attempt to approach the pole. The view from Bay Road is terrific. Watch this space for Nancy Bennett's weekly report on The Ospreys of Duxbury!

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